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JAB-O-METER
TAKE YOUR SHOT
May 3 3,93,339 doses
May 4 12,04,711 doses
TOTAL: 1,89,60,56,429

NATION WIDE	MAY 3	MAY 4
Fresh cases	2,568	3,205
Recoveries	2,971	2,802
Deaths	20	31

MAHARASHTRA	MAY 3	MAY 4
Fresh cases	707	148
Recoveries	1007	167
Deaths	01	0

SUPREME COURT TO EXAMINE LEGALITY OF SEALED COVERS

The court said it will look into the practice of judges accepting confidential documents from authorities in a sealed cover

CASE RELATED TO MEDIAONE'S TELECAST BAN

A bench led by Justice D Y Chandrachud was hearing a case related to the Centre's telecast ban on MediaOne, a Kerala news channel. Kerala High Court upheld the ban after the Union home ministry submitted a sealed envelope containing evidence that the channel posed a threat to national security. Sealed covers were used in the Rafale case too

AGAINST TRANSPARENCY, CRITICS SAY

- MediaOne's advocate Dushyant Dave sought an authoritative pronouncement by the court on the use of sealed covers. The bench assured him that it will examine sealed cover jurisprudence
- Critics say the widespread practice of judges accepting sealed covers stands against the principle of judicial transparency

2 weeks
TIME FOR CENTRE TO EXPLAIN ITS ACTION AGAINST MEDIAONE

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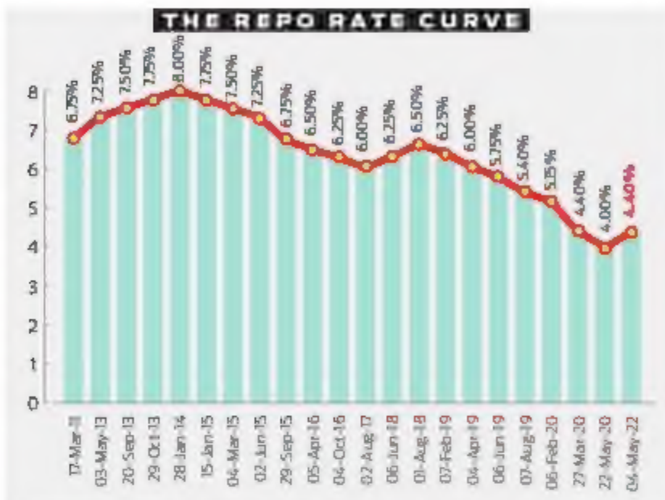
RBI SUDDENLY WAKES UP TO INFLATION

Rate at which it lends to commercial banks up by 40 bps, be prepared to pay more as EMI



POSSIBLE FALLOUT

Retail loan rates
Are linked to repo rates, so they may see immediate increase by 40 basis points. One basis point is one-hundredth of a percentage point

Real estate prices
They have already risen by 5-10% across different markets in India due to raw material inflation. Expect them to go up further

Home loan rates
Are currently in the range of 6.65%-7.15%. Banks will immediately pass on the rate hike to consumers, so expect them to jump

Auto sector
50% of passenger vehicle sales and 90-95% of commercial vehicles are financed by loans. Auto loans are at 7.35-8.05%. Vehicle sales will now take a bigger hit

Personal loans
Used for financing purchase of consumer durables. They are currently available at 10.5-13%. Rate hike will make them pricey

RAM SAHGAL @ Mumbai

IN a sudden announcement on Wednesday, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) increased the repo rate — the rate at which it lends to banks — by 40 basis points one month ahead of its scheduled Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting where such decisions are normally taken. It comes as an acknowledgement of the fact that the RBI has been late in increasing interest rates ignoring tell-tale signs of non-transitory inflation.

In what looks like a correction of its February and April policy 'mistakes', when it ignored rising inflations and let the policy rates stay unchanged, the Central bank on Wednesday said inflation is rising alarmingly and spreading fast amid a prolonged conflict in Europe.

It cited rising crude, fertiliser and other input costs having a direct impact on food prices in India. The MPC also pointed to the rising pace of policy normalisation across advanced economies and Covid related lockdowns impacting supplies as having "ominous implications for emerging economies, including India."

"In the MPC's view, monetary policy response at this juncture would help preserve macro-financial stability amidst increasing volatility in financial markets," governor Shaktikanta Das said.

So what changed between April and now that forced the RBI to take such an extreme step? Analysts suggest the April inflation reading was much higher than both the RBI and the market's expectations. The general consensus is that inflation in April could be around 7.5%, and they are hoping there is no major upside surprises. Also, rising pump prices since the second fortnight of March are feeding into core inflation prints. They are expected to have intensified in April.

The second reason could be the RBI has pre-empted a similar move by US Federal Reserve. Some analysts also believe that RBI officials' recent meetings with World Bank and IMF economists might have led to the decision to hike rates.

As expected, US Fed raises rate by 0.5%

The US Federal Reserve raised the benchmark short-term rate by 0.5%, its most aggressive intervention since 2000. It also announced shrinking of its $9 trillion balance sheet to slow down the economy and ease prices

Their feedback on the stance, the hawkishness of global central bankers and the realisation how much behind the RBI is in its response, could have also caused this sudden move, says Arvind Chari, CIO, Quantum Advisors.

In his speech, the governor has specifically quoted the International Monetary Fund (IMF), which in its World Economic Outlook of April 2022, noted that the economic effects of the war are spreading far and wide — like seismic waves that emanate from the epicentre of an earthquake — mainly through commodity markets, trade and financial linkages.

The seismic effect of RBI's move, though was felt across the stock and bond markets. Stocks tumbled and bond yields rose in response to the unexpected timing of the rate hike and expectations that the next policy meet in June would also see the repo rate being raised.

"....the crucial backing for the 40 bps hike came from an understanding that inflation is here to stay," said Indranil Pan, chief economist, Yes Bank.

"The timing of the hike is important too as it seems to just precede a likely 50-75 bps increase in the policy rate by the US Fed. This is possibly to ensure that the INR is safe from any speculative attacks, notwithstanding the LIC IPO, and especially as the FX reserves are down by around $30 bn from its peak levels. In this financial year alone, India's FX reserves are down by about USD 6.9 billion," Pan said.

Besides raising the repo rate, the RBI also increased the cash reserve ratio, or the portion of interest-free deposits banks have to park with RBI, by 50 bps to 4.5%. This is part of the MPC's objective of withdrawing accommodation in a calibrated way. It will drain ₹87,000 crore of excess liquidity from the banking system. P13

The risks of unprecedented input cost pressures translating into yet another round of price increases for processed food, non-food products and services are now more potent than before - Shaktikanta Das

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SHO arrested over raping UP gang-rape survivor

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

A Station House Officer (SHO) accused of raping a minor in a Uttar Pradesh police station was arrested on Wednesday and the entire staff of his station, comprising 29 police personnel, was attached to the police lines for the horrific crime.

The girl had gone to the Pali police station in Lalitpur to record her statement in a gang-rape case filed by her two days earlier.

As per Lalitpur Superintendent of Police Nikhil Pathak, four people kidnapped her and took her to Bhopal where they gang-raped her on April 22. She later escaped from their captivity and reached the Pali station in Lalitpur district to register a complaint against the four men. Initially, SHO Tilakdhari Saroj, sent her to a destitute home along with her aunt. However, two days later, he asked her to come back so that he could record her statement. When she arrived, Saroj took her to a room inside the police station and raped her.

The survivor narrated her ordeals to Lalitpur SP, who suspended Saroj. After an initial investigation, five people, including Saroj, were booked under Sections 363, 376, 376B, 120B of the IPC and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) and 3(2)5 of the SC/ST Act. "Taking cognizance of the issue, Additional Director General Kanpur Zone has ordered to attach the entire staff, comprising 29 police personnel, of Pali police station to the police lines," ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said.

The Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police has directed DIG (Jhansi Range) to conduct an inquiry and submit a report on the conditions under which the SHO committed the crime. The DIG has also been asked to probe the role of supervisory officer. Four have so far been arrested in the case.

DySP, inspector suspended for role in PSI scam

RAMKRISHNA BADSESHI @ Kalaburagi

DYSP (Fingerprints) of Kalaburagi RR Hosmani, Inspector of Women Police Station Dileep Sagar and police constable Rudragowda were suspended on Monday on charges of criminal negligence in the PSI recruitment scam.

The office of Home Minister Araga Jnanendra confirmed the suspension. But top police officers in Kalaburagi said they are yet to receive the orders.

Kalaburagi Police Commissioner Ravikumar suspended Rudragowda on charges of criminal negligence. Hosmani, Dileep Sagar and constable Rudragowda were posted at Jnana Jyoti English Medium School, where exam malpractice is said to have taken place.

The CID has arrested eight candidates and 18 others in connection with the scam.

CID may take these police officers into custody and interrogate them, sources said. This is the first time that police officers of the rank of DySP and police inspector have been suspended in the scam. P6

PC heckled for defence of Didi govt

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Kolkata

FORMER Union minister and Congress leader P Chidambaram was on Wednesday heckled and chased away by lawyers belonging to his own party after he defended the Trinamool Congress government and a private firm at the Calcutta High Court in a case brought by the state Congress unit.

State Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had filed the case challenging the decision of the Mamata government to sell shares of the state-run Metro Dairy to agro-processing firm Keventer, alleging corruption worth several crores in the deal.

Chidambaram fought the case on behalf of Keventer, triggering protests by lawyers from the Congress' legal cell.

"The former Union minister was shown black robes and called a Trinamool sympathiser by lawyers from the Congress's legal cell. He was chased away from the court premises," said a police officer.

P Chidambaram being heckled by Congress lawyers in Kolkata | SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

After 6 years, not a single house given to urban poor

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

IT has been six years since a scheme to provide one lakh houses to the urban poor was announced. But till now, not a single house has been allotted. Four chief ministers and four housing ministers have been in power since 2016, but the wait for the urban poor continues.

While political leaders blame the official machinery, officials in turn point fingers at technical issues, including land availability, for the delay. Now, at last, around 1,000 will be allotted in June-end this year.

The scheme was announced by the Siddaramaiah government in 2016. Since then, four chief ministers, including the incumbent Basavaraj Bommai, and four housing ministers -- M Krishnappa, UT Khader, MTB Nagaraj and the incumbent V Somanna -- have not been able to see the project through.

While the Siddaramaiah government started with ground-plus three floors, it was later changed to ground-plus 14 floors as land is not easily available at most urban centres. In 2018, the state government called for tenders to construct one lakh houses. P5

Missing toddler survives forest infested with tigers, leopards over four days

TUSHAR MAJUKAR @Belagavi

IN what can be described as nothing short of a miracle, a two-and-a-half-year-old girl was found four days after going missing in the dense Chapoli forest of Khanapur in Belagavi district. The forest is known to be treacherous and infested with tigers, leopards, bears, and various other wild animals, besides poisonous reptiles.

The toddler, Aditi Itgekar, was finally found in an unconscious state due to starvation, but except for mosquito bites all over her body, she faced no other health issue, and has returned to normal health on being rescued.

Aditi Itgekar with her father Shivaji

How the toddler survived the forests which even grown-ups including defence personnel find it tough to survive remains a wonder.

A decade ago, an IAF helicopter crashed in these forests straddling Karnataka-Goa border near Khanapur. Of the two-man crew, only one was found in an injured state, while the other, who left the crash site to seek help, was never found, assumed to have fallen victim to wild animals.

Aditi with her parents Shivaji and Sunita had been to their relative Shivaji Hambar's house at Chirekhani, a village in Chapoli forest, on April 26 morning. The girl, while playing in the backyard, entered the forest, while her parents were inside the house getting ready to attend the temple inauguration. P5